

2019.05.16 Hazard Mitigation Committee - Public Report

Committee members attending - Bram Towbin, Susan Grimaldi, Sasha Thayer (ex officio), Amos Meacham (Chair), Michael Billingsley (Secretary). A quorum of voting members was present.

Sasha suggested that the meeting could not conduct binding business because we did not post our Agenda on town website in advance of the meeting. (It was posted on-line and at required town locations). The committee mutually agreed to proceed without holding binding votes on any business including final approval of last month's Minutes.

The Agenda was reviewed and discussion began at 7:10 pm.

1. April Minutes were read and small corrections were suggested.
2. PUC report- GMP successfully altered the schedule to move back the proceedings. ANR has adopted many of the same safety considerations as Plainfield. The rebuttal stage is underway, and GMP is fighting almost all opposing positions with its own experts. PUC provided the parties with the name of the independent engineer who will be evaluating all the claims.

Given that the Committee passed a motion at our April meeting that we would support Michael & Sasha Thayer writing a letter to GMP's attorney - to encourage GMP to do no construction at the dam (and incorporating Bram's suggestion that the attorney's "client" be informed of Plainfield's hoped-for outcome) Sasha again reiterated her intention to draft that letter with Michael, and to send it.

3. The June forum topic has shifted to global climate change and its local effects. Hopefully Lesley-Ann Dupigny-Giroux (the Vermont State Climatologist) will be our lead presenter, with a regional weather forecaster (like Roger Hill) providing the context on local weather. This sparked a discussion about local weather shifts and the benefit of including references to this in the new Town Plan.

A discussion occurred to determine if there were objections to changing the theme of our June meeting forum. The voting members present were unanimous in their expression of approval of the change to climate.

4. Electrical grid outages (Michael's research project) - Venezuela is an example of a poorly maintained system that is vulnerable to tampering - especially at their main dam. Ukraine & Georgia systems were both hacked into by the Russians in advance of military action, and they (and other state actors) have found ways into our own software that is central to the U.S. power infrastructure including grid, nuclear reactors & dams.

It was suggested by committee members... given that Venezuela's power production dam was controlled by computer software... that the U.S. had an interest in hacking into and disrupting the dam's connection with their grid.

Examples were given of the multiple ways in which an extensive grid outage (beyond 3-4 days) would disrupt the production, delivery & availability of essential goods and services including access to funds.

Infrastructure sustainability & continuity were stressed in the group - and the suggestion came back to how the town can add a battery array to the park & ride solar panels to at least have municipal backup power in the event the grid goes down. Should any of this go into the Town Plan?

Michael gave Putney as an example of a Vermont town where an electrical-outage "Refuge Zone" was proposed (buildings for municipal governance, a community kitchen & canning facility, a childcare facility, crisis housing for persons with chronic health conditions or medical conditions requiring electrically-powered equipment, and a community infirmary) which would run from a source of sustainable power... in Putney's case a revitalized adjacent dam.

5. No new business

6. Discussion ended at 8:30 p.m.